

# He Who Overcomes

by Pat Kenney

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*The church of Thyatira is a warning to us about the dangers of tolerating evil and allowing false teaching to spread, and the importance of having a right heart and striving for a balance of love and truth.*

**Duration:** 1:10:05

**Topics:** "Overcomer's"

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## Description

In this sermon, the commentator discusses the development of denominations in church history. He explains that it usually starts with a passionate individual who is on fire for Jesus Christ. This individual's passion then evolves into a movement, which eventually becomes quantified and turns into a machine-like structure. The commentator emphasizes the importance of maintaining a genuine and intimate relationship with God, as well as resolving any conflicts or issues with others in order to approach communion and worship in a worthy manner. The sermon also references the book of Revelation, particularly the letters to the seven churches, highlighting their relevance to the church age and the need for self-examination and repentance.

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## Transcript

Thank you for being alive. Thank you for promising to be with us always, even to the end of the age. Thank you that you are our Good Shepherd.

Lord, that we are your people. Lord, your sheep, the people of your pasture. Lord, you love us.

You care for us. You've given us your Holy Spirit to empower us and fill us and use us for your glory. And we thank you, Lord.

Thank you for another opportunity today to express our love publicly to you, Lord. God, we pray that in our private moments that we would honor you equally. God, have your way now in searching us as we open your word.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.

All right. Let's open our Bibles to the book of Revelation, chapter two. And this morning, we're going to begin at verse 18.

Verse 18. As you remember, John, the beloved John, the apostle, John, who gave us the gospel of John and the epistles of John, first, second and third John, also is the author of the book of Revelation. Actually, Jesus was the author of the book.

He gave it to an angel and John dictated or he dictated it to John and John wrote it down. And the book was divided into basically three sections. The first section is a vision of Jesus, a very important vision that is carried throughout the book.

The middle section is chapters two and three, which deal with the situation of the church age. Now, granted, this was written about 1900 years ago to the infant church. But we're still we're still an infant church today, even though we're 2000 years almost down the road.

In terms of eternity, we're just getting started. You know, we're just taking our first baby steps. And so these letters were not just written to geographical churches, those seven geographical churches in Asia Minor.

But as each letter, as each letter ends, it says to him who has ears to hear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. So there's that not only the corporate speaking, but it's to the individual as well. And as we looked at Ephesus and Smyrna and Pergamos last week, we want to continue and look at the next two.

The next two churches are Thyatira and Sardis. And let's recap those five churches very, very briefly. Ephesus, the very first one at the picture of the church during the time of the apostles through John's death up to probably about 100 A.D. Ephesus was well organized and doctrinally sound, but it had heart problems.

How many of you know that can happen today? You can have your doctrine straight. You can be fighting off false teachers and those are good. But God is interested in a right heart.

You can have all of that. And if you don't have a right heart, the Lord says, I'm going to remove you. It's not going to bear fruit.

It's not going to grow. So we look at the emphasis as the backsliding church. And Jesus said to them, return to your first love.

I'm sure glad he said that, aren't you? That he didn't say to the backsliding church, OK, you've blown it. Don't ever talk to me again. I'm very grateful for the grace of God and the mercy of God.

That we can come to him. And there may be some of you here this morning that really need to be renewed. You need to get right in your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And perhaps you're you're in that place where you had it once. But then you kind of blew it and then you came back and then you blew it again and then you came back and they blew it again and you're going, God can't reach me anymore. I'm just I just can't do this.

Maybe all along there's been a heart problem. Maybe you've been trying to do too much and not have a right heart while you were doing it. The Lord wants to do some heart surgery today and give you a new heart.

That's a work of God's spirit. I can keep rules for so long. And then I'm going to break one.

You know what I'm talking about. You know, we want to be law abiding citizens. We want to do follow the laws.

We know the laws are good. And yet, sure enough, when we hit the interstate, there's something just heavy and leaden about our right leg that that we just find ourselves breaking the law. You might say, speak for yourself, Pastor.

I confess. Forgive me. But God is a forgiving God and he wants to renew us and he wants us to grow in him.

And that starts in your heart. So if you've had a problem in serving, it may be because your heart's not right. It's been called the Church of Neglected Love.

What we do for the Lord is important, but so is the why that we do it. The second church was Smyrna. And the word means myrrh, which was a very fragrant perfume.

Its use that we see mostly in scripture was for anointing bodies, dead bodies for embalming purposes. And it really speaks of suffering. The Church of Smyrna speaks of a persecuted church and historically the Christian church underwent severe persecution from the time of John's death till the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine in the early 300 AD.

Smyrna was the church in suffering, the persecuted church. And though they felt that they were very poor, the Lord looked at them and said, you are very rich. They had poverty with plenty because of their relationship with the Lord.

And so the Lord says, don't be afraid, be faithful and I'll give to you the crown of life and you won't be overcome by the second death. You know, if you're born once, we mentioned this last week, you're going to die twice. There'll be the physical death and then there'll be the eternal separation.

Physical death is simply the separation of your consciousness from your physical body. It's gone. That's physical death.

Take that away, you die once. But there is also a spiritual separation that ultimately will happen if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. If you haven't given your heart to the Lord, you're still lost in your sins, then there will be a second death that you'll have to face.

Here he's telling those that were pressing on, even though it was hard. And frankly, I think it is a very hard time to be a Christian. It's not a hard time to be a churchgoer, but it is a hard time to be a Christian.

It's a hard time to live a separated life. Amen? It's hard not to take on the things of the world. It's hard not to look at the things of the world and enjoy them at the expense of your purity and your walk with Jesus.

So the people at Sardis, though they were facing great persecution for their testimony, he said, hold on. The second death is not going to have any power over you. And they did press on.

Well, then we looked at Pergamos. And Pergamos means, literally, Pergamum means mixed marriage. And it seems to parallel that period from about 300 AD to 600 AD when the church came under the umbrella of protection from the Emperor Constantine.

The previous emperors were all heading up persecutions on the Christians. Constantine came along and supposedly had a conversion experience. And then in an amazing political maneuver to establish his kingdom, he basically legalized Christianity.

And there was a mixing. There wasn't an elimination of the idolatry. There wasn't an elimination of all of the false things, but there was just kind of a mixing of them in.

And so pagan holidays became Christian holidays. Pagan temples became Christian temples, so on. Pagan priests became Christian priests.

There was that mixing of the world. Pergamos was what we would call the church in compromise. Married to the world, and there was great pressure in this church to be open-minded, tolerant of sinful and immoral practices.

And that sounds a lot like battles that we have today, wouldn't you agree? And I'm not pointing to any one church, because I think this type of church can exist and has existed in every generation, from the time of the apostles to the time of Constantine to the Middle Ages to today. I think all seven of these churches can be found in churches today. All seven of these characteristics talked about in these churches can be found within our own church.

It can be found in our own hearts, in our own lives. And that's why I love these letters, because they are so penetrating, they are so searching, and exposing the motives and the intents of our heart. So Ephesus losing its first love.

Smyrna, there wasn't any rebuke of Smyrna, just an encouragement to press on. And then Pergamos, the church in compromise. Well, we move from compromise to Thyatira, and Thyatira would be the unrepentant church.

Thyatira literally means daughter, and it sort of follows along the morality and the immorality and the idol worship that began in the Pergamon church seemed to give birth to even greater idolatry in the Thyatiran church. Thyatira historically is thought to cover that period of what's known as the Dark Ages, that period of around 600 AD to 1500, where the church was the offspring of more spiritual immorality and paganism. And it's often looked, the Roman Catholic church is often focused on in this letter to the Thyatira.

Now, I don't think the scriptures really give us a specific confirmation of that, that yes, this is the Roman Catholic church. It is anything, any church that puts any love above the love of Jesus Christ. Anything that any church or any person that allows a greater love than the love for Jesus to be dominating in your life.

And that's what Thyatira did. It brought in all kinds of substitutes, things that made it a little easier to be a Christian, where they weren't opposed as much to the culture, to the society around them. And I think we see that in churches today too, don't we? We see churches that are moving further and further away from the scriptures and look more and more like a social club.

It's Saturday night live, it's a show because that's what people are used to. People are used to going to shows. So church becomes a show, but you gotta be careful because the offspring of that could really get you far away from the truth of what the Lord has.

So Thyatira. Thyatira was an interesting church. It was a church where in the city of Thyatira, it was known for its collection of trade guilds, trade unions, more so than any other Asian city.

And the trade unions identified with various patron gods, and they participated in the worship of those gods, which included ritual prostitution, idol worship, and just overall debauchery. That was very common in the trade unions in those days. Obviously, that would be a problem for a Christian, wouldn't it? Somebody that was in the trade unions gets saved.

What do you do? How does a church survive in that kind of a situation? As the Christian church began to grow there, there came increasing pressure to go along with the immoral practices of the trade unions. Rather than taking a straight and narrow stand for the truth of the word of God and the absolute authority of Jesus Christ over his church, many had succumbed to the demonic rhetoric of false prophets. And though they were a loving church, they were no longer a true church.

So we read in verse 18, to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, these things says the son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and his feet like brass. Fire speaks of that searching out that God can do, and the brass speaks of judgment. And God is saying he's going to be searching this church, examining and exposing.

And I think it's interesting, he said, this is the only time the term son of God is used in these letters. And I think it's important because in Thyatira, they had brought in substitutes for the son of God. They were allowing the idols that were popular to begin to be allowed in the church.

And certainly those of us from a Catholic background can see the place of icons within the church. And I don't, it's what Catholicism here is in the States, you ought to see what it's like in other parts of the world, in places where it's rabid idol worship and immoral lifestyle. People controlled by the church, faithful to go to church, but living lives that are totally ungodly.

It's kind of like, I remember growing up a Catholic, that it was very, the system, and I'm just speaking from my own perspective here, that the system made it so that I could go to church, go to confession. How many of you former Catholics here know what I'm talking about? Go to confession, bless me father for I have sinned. My last confession was two weeks ago, and here's the list.

And then father says to you, say 10 Our Fathers and 15 Hail Marys and an act of contrition. All right, I'm clean, out I go, see you in two weeks. There was always a two weeks.

I came back two weeks later, same list. Two weeks later, same list. Because in my mind, there was that sense of, okay, I'm cool for two weeks.

I got it clean for two weeks. And I know that as long as I don't really blow it, I can come back and get it together. That didn't draw me close to Jesus Christ.

That didn't lead me into a 24 seven worship of the one true God. And I was more interested in the statues and in the ritual than I was in the person of the savior. You go over to the Philippines and there's every Catholic church you go into.

There's statues and offering boxes in front of them and banks of void of lights where you're lighting candles and dropping in offerings and kissing the statues so much so that the toes and the feet are worn off from all the kisses that come along. And I don't doubt that many of these statues are of people who really love the Lord, but there's only one mediator between God and man. And the scripture declares it's Jesus.

It's not the priest. It's not a saint. It's not the Virgin Mary.

I know many Catholics are told that you cannot go to Jesus directly. You have to talk to Mary. And in many Catholic settings, it's actual Mary worship.

Mary has been elevated to the level of co-redemptrix, which means that Mary can forgive your sins. That's idolatry. Because Mary didn't die for your sins.

Jesus died for your sins. And I've heard it said, you know, go to the, you know, you can't go straight to Jesus, go to his mom. You know, his mom will talk to his mom will talk to Jesus.

But the Bible doesn't tell us that maybe church tradition is telling you that. But this was the danger of some of these churches that they were allowing church tradition to be more important than the son of God, more important than that personal daily relationship that you and I are to have with the living God through Jesus Christ, God, the son. And we can come before the Lord without any other mediator.

You don't need Pastor Mark. You don't need Pastor Pat to go to God for you. If you are born of the spirit, if Jesus has forgiven your sins and you have confessed him as your Lord and Savior, you have open access to almighty God.

You do. You don't have to go through all of these levels and steps to get to the hotline to heaven. The brand new baby Christian, the sinner who has just been saved, has just as open access as the seasoned saint of 50, 60 years.

There's no respecter of persons before God. And we must not have respecting of persons before one another. But this was a problem in the church of Thyatira.

So we read these things, says the son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire, his feet like fine brass. I know your works. Now look at this.

He commends them in several areas. I know your works, your love, your service, your faith, your patience. And as for your works, the last are more than the first.

So we look at that and we go, wow, well, at Thyatira, they were really growing in love. All of these things are good. Wouldn't you not agree? Love, agape love is critical.

You know, before we say we don't want to be Thyatira, with that, we don't mean, well, we don't want to be loving. We don't want to serve. We don't want to have faith.

We don't want to have patience and forget the works. No, the Lord sees that there, but there was a problem. And I like how, how Lehman Strauss got a great commentary on the book of Revelation.

Lehman Strauss was Richard Strauss's dad. You know, Richard Strauss used to be the beloved pastor over at Emanuel Faith, passed away several years ago, but his dad wrote a great commentary on the book of Revelation. And he says this about Thyatira.

He says, at once we notice a contrast between the church at Thyatira and the church at Ephesus. Ephesus would not tolerate evil, but was lacking in love. Thyatira was gaining in love, but tolerating evil.

These two extremes are with us today. They have never departed from the churches. In some assemblies, we find the moral and doctrinal perfectionists, Pharisees who are loveless and sometimes ruthless in their dealings with brethren whom they believe to have departed from the faith.

In other places, there are those who preach love and toleration, even to the extent of seeking peaceful coexistence between good and evil. No one will argue against the fact that the Bible tells us to love everybody. But it tells us also that righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness.

Darkness has no fellowship with light. There is a place where you got to draw the line. We can still be loving and not welcoming evil.

Amen? Because my goodness, we pray that the church doors would be open for people who don't know the Lord, who are still caught up in wicked evil practices. We don't say to people, clean up your act, shine up your halo, then you can come in. You know, be perfect first, and then you come into the church.

Not at all. This church is a trauma center. It's a place where hurting people need to come.

And we pray that in that place, that there would be healing and restoration. But then, as Jesus would say, go and sin no more. We come to, we bring in a lot when we come in, but it's the truth of God's word that cleanses us.

And we don't keep that stuff anymore. Even though it may be popular in the culture, in the society around us, there's a separated heart that we have now to the Lord. The problem in this particular church, and he gets into it in verse 20, he says, nevertheless, I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, sexual immorality, and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Evidently, the pastoral leadership in that church allowed this particular woman, who was a little spooky, she had some really persuasive gifts, saw visions heard from God, and they allowed her a platform. They gave her the opportunity to bring in false teaching, false doctrine, and basically seduce the people into accepting the practices that were common there in Thyatira. Problems here weren't from outside persecution as it was in Smyrna and Pergamos.

The big problem this church faced was from the inside, from what they allowed into their midst. You remember Paul rebuking the Corinthian church because they were so tolerant of an openly immoral man. The church had works and service and patience, but it was filled with sin.

And here we have Jezebel, the only woman mentioned in the seven letters, referring to wicked Queen Jezebel, the wife of Ahab. You can read that back in the Old Testament in 1 Kings 16 through 2 Kings 10. She was a heathen woman, daughter of a priest of Baal.

She promoted Baal worship in Israel. She was guilty of hoarding and witchcraft, as well as idolatry, murder, deceit, and priestcraft. And the church at Thyatira was following her example and leadership.

It was Jezebel that gave the nation of Israel its greatest push downhill towards judgment. She called herself a prophet. It's not what you call yourself that counts.

It's what God calls you. I think that tells us very much that don't be too quick to give yourself a title. We can see that, and I've certainly seated here that over my years of ministry, that it's the people that have to tell

me what their gifts are that they are the people I'm usually the most suspicious of.

Somebody comes up to me cold turkey and says, I'm a prophet. I'm going to go, you know, oh really? And I have to do that as a shepherd. Just because someone comes up and says, I've got a vision and I want to share it with the church.

What do I do? Say, oh sure, come on up. No, the scripture tells us to test the prophets. Check out where they're at.

What is the message they're giving? Is it sound? Is it true? Is it consistent with the whole counsel of God in the scripture? If it's not, shut up. Glad you're here, but you're not here for a platform. You're not here to spew your particular vision or spin on how you think things should be.

For example, it's very common in our world and our culture today to accept the fact that marriage is sort of kind of an optional thing. You can live together just as well as being married together. If you just can't stand that person after a while, just divorce them and find another one.

And in our day and age, in our culture, they've said that's okay. That's normal. If you look at most of the media today, you think the common thing to do is to live with your boyfriend, live with your girlfriend before you get married.

And then if you really, really like them and are really committed to them, maybe then you get married. The Bible calls that fornication. And if you're doing it with somebody who was already married, he calls it adultery.

We call it getting to know each other. But there are churches where a stand against that is not taken. Last week, we talked a little bit about the whole gay lesbian thing that is so popular today.

And so many church denominations today have abdicated the scriptural position on that. And they've allowed people in to promote it. I believe that's the spirit of Jezebel here.

It's going against, it's bringing in false teaching into the church. And instead of building people up in sound doctrine, it was tearing people down. Instead of having the true God that they were worshiping, they were now diverted.

And they were worshiping the gods of their own flesh. Jezebel perhaps brought a message trying to solve the predicament for a trades person who became a Christian, trying to solve the problem. Do I still pay my dues to the union through idle sacrifices? And apparently this prophetess received messages that told the people that it was okay to do these things.

After all, you got to make a living, got to provide for your family. And it was a very reasonable sounding argument, but it took them away from their obedience to the son of God. And that's what the Lord's rebuking there.

And I think the same thing would be true in our lives as well. What have we allowed to enter into our life that's more important than Jesus? And I want to keep asking myself that question. And I want you to keep asking yourself that question, because that's the key to us bearing fruit and growing as a true Christian church.

Are we still broken before the Lord? Are we honestly saying, Lord, search me, expose me, change me. If we stop that intimate communion with Jesus, we will create substitutes. And that is what happened to the church in that dark ages period.

The proliferation of substitutes for Jesus through the icon worship and so forth took precedence. And what's most important now for the average typical Catholic is that they be faithful to the church, to the holy Roman Catholic church. But the scripture says, be faithful to Jesus.

And so my plea would be, come and know Jesus. Let Jesus truly be your Lord and savior. And I know in our congregation right here, probably half of us are from a Catholic background.

And I thank God I heard about Jesus. But I had to do some unlearning about all the other stuff I heard. Because none of that could redeem me.

None of that could change me. Only the living Christ could change me. God's not dead.

He's alive. And I pray he's alive in you. I'm not suggesting we go over to St. Timothy's and resurrection and St. Mary's and start picketing.

I wouldn't, I wouldn't dare do that. But if you're from a Catholic background, and you don't know that your sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ, there's good news for you. And I want you to know that good news.

I want you to be forgiven, not just every two weeks, but for the rest of eternity. And I want you to have that hope of heaven, not that fear of purgatory. Because the average Catholic does not have any certain hope of heaven.

When you die, you go to purgatory. And you enter a cleansing process of all the stuff you didn't mention. And even the stuff you did mention, you still got some more cleaning to do.

Well, how long do I have to be there? Well, I don't know. But if you do these certain things, it'll take a few years off of it. Indulgences, you know.

But that's bondage, man. That's just total bondage. There's no freedom there.

There's no true relationship with the Savior there. Because once you have a relationship with the Savior, you're His forever. And when you take your last breath here, you take your first one in your glorified body in heaven.

When we're done here, we're with Him. To be absent from the body, the scripture declares, is to be present with the Lord, not on a slow burn for eons. I'm so thankful for Jesus.

And I pray you are too. He gives some pretty stern warning here. He says, look, I've given her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she didn't repent.

And remember when it says sexual immorality, please don't forget this. It's not just immoral behavior. Because the term translated sexual immorality, fornication, porneo, was used to also speak of leaving the one true God for a substitute, having other gods.

Remember to the nation Israel, the Lord said through the prophets, you've gone a whoring after idols. You've left me for another woman. In that sense, God was jealous, rightly so, of His people.

They were to be married to the Lord. And they committed adultery by worshiping other gods. Now here He's saying, if you've been into that, He said, I gave her time to repent.

And I would dare say, if you're here today, and you've been into any of that kind of stuff, the Lord's given you time to repent too. Hallelujah. And He's given you another opportunity today to get right with Him.

I pray you do so. Because there's judgment coming. He says in verse 22, I'm going to cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

And I will kill her children with death. And here the idea is not just little kids are going to get killed, but it's the followers of that false teaching. Those that are reproducing that false teaching.

And all the churches shall know, He says, that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. So I say to you, and the rest in Thyatira, and as many as who do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.

So evidently there were some people in the church of Thyatira who had not given into this stuff. And to them, He gives them an encouragement. He says, hold fast till I come.

And he who overcomes and keeps my works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron. They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessel, as I also have received from my father.

That's speaking of after the great tribulation, when Jesus comes back to reign, that we're going to reign with him. We're going to rule with him. And he's telling these faithful ones in Thyatira, you hold on, you be faithful, and you're going to rule and reign together.

And he says, and I'll give him the morning star. Who is the morning star? I believe it's Jesus. In Revelation 22, 16, we read, I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches.

I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star. Jesus is our bright and morning star. And the morning star pierces the darkness and ushers in the dawn of a new life.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Now, following that period of the dark ages came the Reformation time, from about 1500 to historically around the 1700s, 1800s, though I think there are some that still think they're part of the Reformation movement today. But the problem is with the Reformation movement, they sought to reform Catholicism, but they didn't go far enough and ended up with a dead orthodoxy themselves.

They had a form of religion, but didn't have the power. And so this is what Sardis is referring to. Sardis was what might be called a has-been city.

By this time, Sardis had quite a history, several hundred years before Christ. It was a very powerful city. It had a very protected position strategically.

It was kind of built on an extension bluff of a mountain range. It was impassable on three sides. It had a river that kind of curved around the bottom, which served as a natural moat.

And they felt like the only place anyone could attack was from those cliffs. And so they only put guards on the one way and not the other three ways. And several times over history, they were overcome by the Medo-Persians, by Alexander the Great, in the Roman times, but they kept rebuilding.

And they had the temple of Diana Artemis, you know, a magnificent wonder that was built there. And then in AD 17, a monstrous earthquake hit the area and turned it into rubble. Again, they tried to rebuild.

And so the church at Sardis and the people of Sardis kind of were living on past reputation historically. And that bled into the church at Sardis. Evidently, when they started, they were right on.

But then, rather than staying right on, they just rested on the fact that 20 years ago, we were right on. 20 years ago, there was a great movement. And I'll tell you, Calvary Chapel has to be careful of that, too.

Because God's done a great move in the Calvary Chapel. It's been wonderful to watch what God has done in the last 35 years in the Calvary Chapel movement. One commentator, I believe his name is Hanover, said that when you look at church history and you look at the development of denominations, it usually starts with a man, starts with a man just on fire for Jesus Christ.

And then pretty soon, it moves into a movement. It develops into a movement. And after a little while, you have to begin to quantify the movement.

You have to detail the movement, and then it can become a machine. And we have this little machine and that little machine and that little machine. And we all put out these little machines that look like the movement that had its inspiration with the man.

And what happens to machines? They break. And you go to museums to see the relics, right? Isn't that what we do? And there's cathedrals and beautiful works that had been built in the name of faith in Jesus Christ, but now are just shells. And yet there is oftentimes great pride in what that shell represented.

But that's dead orthodoxy. That's dead Protestantism. The Lord deals with both the problem in Thyatira of idol worship, of substitute worship.

And then he deals with having the doctrine but not have any life. So the angel to the church in Sardis, right? These things, says he who has the seven spirits of God, that is that demonstration of the complete working of the spirit of God in our lives. And the seven stars, the seven stars represented the messengers, the pastors of those churches.

And so the picture there is the spirit of God working in and through those local churches. And I think that's the answer to dead orthodoxy. It's to be on fire with the spirit of God.

It's a spirit renewal. It's a relationship that is not based in the past but is living right now, walking in the spirit, not walking in the past. Wow, it was great back in the 70s, man.

Long hair, short hair, coats and ties, people finally coming around. Oh, it was great having a tent. Man, I wish we could have a tent again because that's where it was really happening.

That's living in the past. Are you living for Jesus today? That's what Sardis examines. And we have the picture of the spirit of God.

And that's the only one who can bring life to a church. Wouldn't you agree? It's not our programs. It's not our works.

It's not our traditions. It's not even our statements and our confessions. Because you look at the Westminster Confession, some of the creeds of the main denominations, and they're sound.

They're sound statements of faith. But just because you have the statement doesn't mean you have the life. And God wants his people to have the life, not just memorizing, you know, point one of my statement of faith, point two of my doctrine of faith, point three of my confession of faith.

I can memorize, but just having it memorized doesn't mean that I've yielded my heart to the control of the living Lord in me. And that's, I think, what he's dealing with Sardis. He says, I know your works, and I know that you have a name and that you're alive, but hey, hello, you're dead.

D-E-A-D. I don't know what it is in the Greek exactly, but you're dead. That's our English interpretation.

Dead. Because it's the spirit of God that gives us life. And without the Holy Spirit, we're spiritually dead.

So the church of Sardis is the dead church, and they needed the power of the Holy Spirit. He says, I know your works. I completely understand what motivates your works.

Nothing is hidden from the Lord. He says, you have a name, you have a reputation to form men. You have a name of being alive, but it's a false profession.

And didn't Jesus say in Matthew 7 on the Sermon on the Mount, didn't he say, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. So it's not just what we look like on the outside. What do we have on the inside? Formalism.

This is a rebuke of formalism. I'm not worshiping informalism, but there's a danger when you say this is the only way you can worship God. This is the only way you can have a church service.

And you do that, and you do that, and you do that, and leaving no room for the Lord to do anything new and different. Not new and different in terms of new revelation and different from the scripture, because God's spirit will never go contrary to what the written word reveals. Never.

And that's where we have to be careful of the false prophets, because somebody can say, thus saith the Lord, I have seen this behavior, and I understand the reason, and you can go do it. Gotta have a discerning spirit, amen? So he says, you have a name of being alive, but you're dead. In Isaiah 29, 13, the Lord said, these people claim to worship me, but their words are meaningless, and their hearts are somewhere else.

Oh, Lord. I pray, I pray that that doesn't happen here, where our words are meaningless, and our hearts are somewhere else. But I know the danger, that once you learn the rap, once you learn the songs, you can kind of come and just go through the motions, and then leave and not have anything change you.

That's the spirit of Sardis, and we don't want that. And maybe when you came in this morning, and your mind was not on worshiping God, and it wasn't on the word, it was what you're going to have for lunch, and you're going to go surfing this afternoon, you're going to do this, you're going to do, and you're just, is he done yet? We still have to have communion. Come on, I'm almost done.

But you know, that's sad. That's sad, because the Lord so wants the love of your heart. And be careful of that formalism, where the religion is nothing but human rules and traditions.

The Lord says it's dead. And that's a radical thing for the Lord to say to a church, isn't it? You're dead. You might be impressive before man, but the things that are impressive before man are not always impressive to God.

The form is there, but there was an empty shell. And I do think we got to be careful, you know, we do got to be a little careful about this thing of deadness, because sometimes we can say, oh, we're so alive. You know, we have powerful worship, and we raise our hands, and we do this and that, and anybody who doesn't must be dead.

So be careful. I mean, there's those who think that dead church is where people aren't running around wild in the aisles and laying on the floor, barking like dogs. Boy, if you don't do that, you're not really yielded to the Spirit.

You're really a dead church. Be careful of that. Deadness is when the Spirit of God isn't working.

And how do we know if the Spirit of God is working? I think there's two primary evidences. Number one, there's going to be spiritual births. New life is going to be given to people as they're born again.

And there's going to be the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace and long suffering and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control. Church is not a circus.

Church is not a free-for-all. There is that Spirit of the prophets subject to the prophets. I just want more of Jesus.

We used to sing that to the Sunday school kids a long time ago. I want more of Jesus, more and more and more. I want more of Jesus than I ever had before.

More and more of his great love, rich and full and free. I want more of Jesus so I'll give him more of me. That's what he wants.

He wants you and I. As we come to the table, we want to come with that heart. Don't come to the table if you're just going through a ritual. Oh, it's communion Sunday.

I got to take communion. Is your heart right? Oh, come on man, don't go there. Don't start meddling with me.

But that's what God says. He says, don't eat and drink this cup in an unworthy manner in 1 Corinthians 11. If you got ought against your brother or sister, if there's something that's not right in your relationship with God, in your relationship with one another, what are you waiting for? Get right today.

Once again, we just sang that. We sang that song once again, Lord. God's given us another once again this morning to get right with him.

I'm going to have the pastors come up here. In fact, why don't you guys come on up now and James and Rebecca, come on up. We need to be watchful.

We need to strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. We need to remember how we've received and heard, and we need to hold fast and repent. Because if we don't, the Lord says, I'm going to come upon you as a thief and you're not going to know what hour I come upon you.

Oh, let's be those people who haven't been defiled, who are walking in that submitted relationship to the Lord. So maybe you need to have that relationship this morning. That's why we're going to be up here.

As you come up, if you're not right with the Lord, but you want to get right with the Lord, then you come up to one of us and say, Pastor, I just want to get right with Jesus today. I just want to confess him. I know I've sinned.

And when I came in here today, I didn't have that assurance. But today I've learned that I can have that hope. And that hope is in Jesus.

Would you pray with me? And we'll take care of that first. And then partake. Maybe there's somebody here that you got ought against.

Maybe it's someone you're sitting next to. And you need to forgive. Not only do you need to forgive yourself, but if somebody asks you to forgive them, let go ahead and forgive them.

Amen. Because the Lord said, don't have those things in your heart when you come up to the altar. When you come up, leave the altar, go to your brother, get it right, and then come back and do what you need to do.

So I'm going to ask you to come on up to the front as you're ready to take the bread, to take the cup, the bread representing the body of Jesus, the physical body of Jesus that was given for us. That's what this bread represents. It doesn't become the physical body of Jesus, but it reminds us that Jesus was real.

And it reminds us that Jesus' real body suffered for you and I. And the cup reminds us of the blood of the blood of Jesus. It doesn't become the blood of Jesus, but it speaks to us of the precious gift and how great that price was that Jesus paid for us. And when we eat the bread and we drink the cup, well, Jesus said, eat of me and you'll never hunger.

Drink of me and you'll never thirst. What is that? That's relationship with the Lord. When you're obeying the Lord and you're following him, it's like eating of him, the bread of life, the word of God.

And as we take the cup, he said, you're not going to thirst anymore. You're not going to go a whoring after any other gods once you've come to me. I'll satisfy that thirst.

Hey, we all have thirst, but only Jesus can fill that ache of your heart to be complete and to be satisfied. Only Jesus can do that. So let's worship the Lord together.

Let's pray first. And then James and Rebecca, please lead us. And then we'll come up to the table.

And if you need any of us to pray or a brother or a brother and sister sitting next to you in the row that you're in can pray with you as well. But let's thank the Lord. Father, it is a joy to be able to partake together as a church family.

Lord, you've given us some very pointed verses in the letter to these two churches. And so, Father, we this morning ask you to search our hearts. And if the attitude or the spirit of these things are found in us, then

Lord, we would confess that to you today.

Lord, we would ask you to cleanse us of those things, that we might walk in that intimate daily relationship with you. Give us ears to hear, Lord, what your spirit is saying to your church in Jesus name. Amen.

Let's worship the Lord. And as you're ready, please come on up to the tables. Jesus, I put my trust in you.

Save the rest, Lord, save the rest. I put my trust in your faithful friends. It's in you alone.

There is no way alive in your precious blood. On Calvary's tree where you died for me. And all of this world only to rise.

Giving a hand for forever with you, beautiful Savior. Jesus, Jesus, beautiful Savior. Jesus, I put my trust in you.

Your faithful friend. My confidence is in you. There is no way alive in your precious blood.

On Calvary's tree where you died for me. And all of this world only to rise. Giving a hand for forever with you, beautiful Savior.

Jesus, beautiful Savior. Jesus, Jesus, beautiful Savior. Jesus, I put my trust in you.

Your faithful friend. My confidence is in you. Jesus, how sweet the sound.

Amazing love, now flowing down. From hands and feet, now a meadow to a tree. As grace flows down and comforts me, comforts me.

Jesus, how sweet the sound. Amazing love, now flowing down. From hands and feet, now a meadow to a tree.

Thank you, Lord. Lord, we do thank you. We do rejoice, Lord, in your amazing grace.

Your grace flowing down to each of us so freely, so powerfully, so gently. Thank you, Lord, for your love for each of us. God, we're, as a church family, God, we're just telling you we love you.

Expressing to you the desire for your Spirit to be alive in us. To be working in our church. To be working in our individual lives.

Lord, that we might walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. That we might be your people, sheep of your pasture, Lord. That you would be pleased when you look at this church, Lord.

When you look at each of our personal lives, Lord. God, help us to be teachable. God, keep us tender to the truth of your word.

And use us, Lord, as a light in a dark generation. Don't let our love grow cold, Lord. Light that fire again in us, God.

That we might walk wholly after you. In Jesus' name. Amen? Let's stand together.

If you would, please pass your cups to the center. I'm sorry, to the aisles. And the fellows will be collecting them.

And as we're dismissed, let's just sing a round of, Lord, I lift your name on high. Lord, I love to sing your praises. Let's sing it together once and then we'll sing it the second time as we're being dismissed, okay? Let's sing.

Lord, I lift your name on high. Lord, I love to sing your praises. I'm so glad you're in my life.

I'm so glad you came to save us. You came from heaven to earth to show the way. From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay.

From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky. Lord, I lift your name on high. God bless you guys.

You're dismissed.

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